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ABSTRACT

The four Bulgarian folk tales presented in this booklet are part of an ethnic heritage studies teaching unit on Bulgarian culture. The objective of the cultural awareness project is to help American students in elementary, junior high, and high school understand and appreciate Bulgarians and their culture. Titles of the folk tales are "Poor Little Blackbird," "Dame Vixen and the Young Shepherd," "The Months," and "He Who Does No Work Neither Shall He Eat." Project developers state that these four stories are representative of the great body of folktales and childrens' stories which exist in Bulgarian folklore and that they have been handed down from generation to generation in Bulgaria and among Bulgarian immigrants to the United States to form part of the Bulgarian cultural heritage. (DB)

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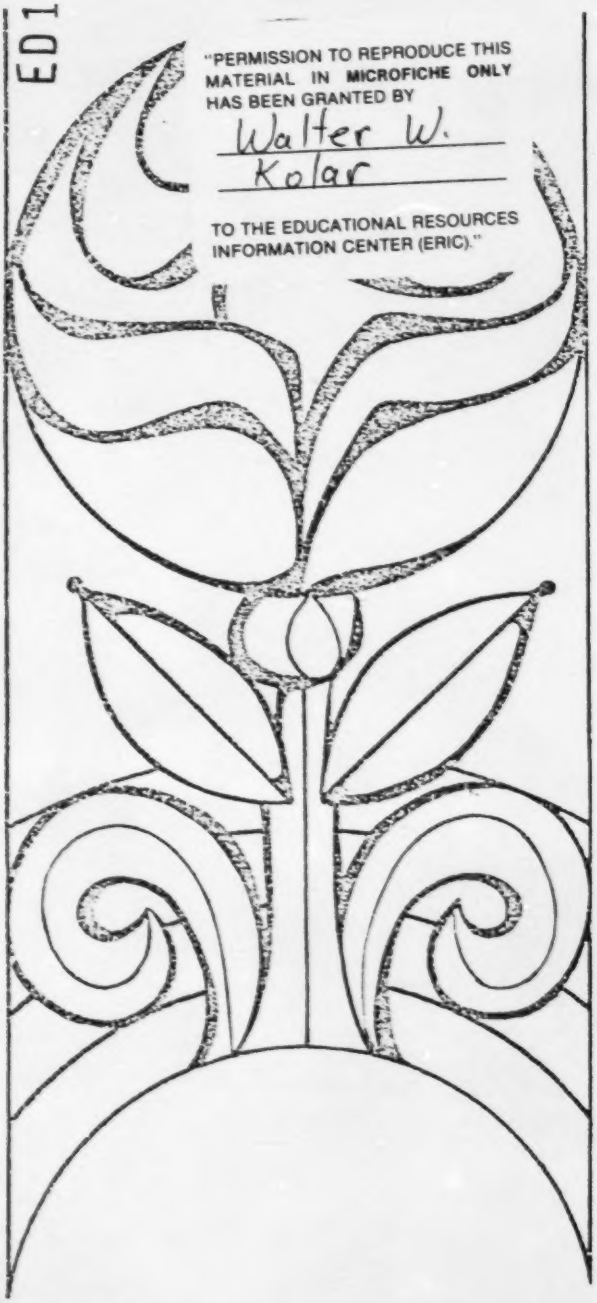

BULGARIANS

FOUR FOLK TALES

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KOSSÉ BOSSÉ

(POOR LITTLE BLACKBIRD)

Kosse Bosse, poor little black bird, made herself a little nest, and laid some little eggs in it. Dame Vixen came along, stood under the nest and cried:

"Kosse Bosse, give me a little egg! Mother and Father have come on a visit. I'm going to cook some broth for them."

So Kosse Bosse gave her a little egg.

The next day Dame Vixen came along again and said:

"Kosse Bosse, give me a little egg! My elder sister and brother have come on a visit."

So Kosse Bosse gave her a little egg again.

She kept coming day after day, until Kosse had only one egg left.

Dame Vixen came along again and said:

"Dear little Kosse Bosse, give me an egg!"

"I have none, Vixen," little Kosse answered.

"If you haven't any, I'll eat you up!"

Little Kosse began to cry and gave her the last little egg. The next morning a dog passed through

the forest. It heard little Kosse crying and asked:

"Why are you crying, Kosse Bosse?"

"How can I help it, Mr. Dog? Dame Vixen comes every morning and takes one of my little eggs. She's taken them all. I haven't been able to hatch any little ones. She'll come again this morning. I have nothing to give her. Now she'll eat me up!"

"Don't cry, Kosse Bosse! I'll hide right here in the bushes. When Dame Vixen comes along for a little egg, you just say to her: 'I have no more eggs, Vixen. But there's a little hen over there in the bushes. Take her instead!'"

So the dog hid in the bushes. Dame Vixen came along again and said:

"Kosse Bosse, give me a little egg!"

"I have none, Vixen. There's a little hen over there in the bushes. Take her, if you like."

Dame Vixen was delighted and began rummaging about in the bushes. Out jumped the dog and went for her.

She ran, he ran after her, she ran, he ran after her, she ran, he ran after her, till she finally reached her lair and hid inside.

The dog stopped right in front of it. He was waiting for Dame Vixen to show her head, so that he could seize her by the throat. Dame Vixen didn't know the dog was standing guard outside and began asking her feet:

"Now tell me, little feet, what were you saying when the dog was after you?"

"Run, Vixen, for dear life, run, Vixen, for dear life!"

"Oh, my darling little feet! Vixen will get you some little slippers....And you, little eyes, what

did you say?"

"Run, Vixen, for dear life, run, Vixen, for dear life!"

"Oh, my darling little eyes! Vixen will get you some nice little spectacles. And, little ears, what did you say?"

"We said the same thing, 'Run, Vixen, run, run, for dear life.'"

"Oh, my darling little ears! Vixen will get you some nice little earrings!...And you, little tail, what did you say?"

"Seize Vixen by the tail dog, seize Vixen by the tail!"

"Did you indeed! Just wait till I give you to the dog to eat!" cried Dame Vixen angrily, and she stuck her tail out of the hole.

The dog seized her by the tail and began tugging at it. Vixen tugged inwards, the dog tugged outwards. She tugged inwards and he outwards, till at last he pulled her out, went for her and tore her little fur coat to ribbons.

One day Dame Vixen fell ill.

"What's the matter with you, Dame Vixen?" the young Shepherd asked.

"I feel so ill, Young Shepherd. I've not had a bite to eat these nine days."

"You'll get over it, Dame Vixen. There's some milk for you. Drink it up."

Dame Vixen drank the milk and soon got well.

Not so long afterwards she ran up to the Shepherd and said to him:

"Long may you live, Young Shepherd! I was dying and you brought me back to life. I want to do you a good turn, too. I'll make a king's son-in-law of you!"

"You must be mad, Dame Vixen! Whoever heard of a shepherd becoming a king's son-in-law?"

"We'll they'll hear of it now!" the Vixen replied. "But first you must do exactly as I tell you. First I want you to find me a silver coin."

The Shepherd put his hand in his pocket and drew out a silver coin.

"There's a silver coin for you," he said to Dame Vixen. "And let's see what comes of it."

Dame Vixen took the coin and ran off to the king's palace. She was admitted to the presence of the king himself.

"Your Majesty," she said. "Please let me have your measure. My master needs it to measure his silver."

The king gave her the royal measure. Dame Vixen took it and went back to the forest. There she wedged the silver coin into it.

Very early the next morning she went back to the palace and returned the royal measure. She handed it back and set off for home.

"Dame Vixen, Dame Vixen!" the royal guards called after her. "Your master has forgotten a silver coin in the measure.

"Never mind, royal guards! It's not worth my while to come back for it. We've got sacksful of coins at home!"

The king heard this and thought: "Her master must be a very rich man!"

Dame Vixen went straight back to the Young Shepherd.

"May you live long, Young Shepherd! Things are going very well. I need a piece of gold now. Do your best to find one."

Young Shepherd sold one of his young rams and gave Dame Vixen a gold piece.

She ran off to the king again.

"Your Majesty!" she said. "Greetings from my master, Slavi. He begs you to help him out again. He wants a royal measure to measure his gold with."

The king gave her his measure.

The following morning she brought it back and set off.

"Dame Vixen, Dame Vixen!" the royal guards called after her. "Your master has forgotten a gold piece in the measure."

"Never mind, royal guards. It's not worth my while to turn back. We've got baskets full of gold coins!"

The king heard her and said: "What a master! He must be richer than I am."

Two or three days later Dame Vixen again appeared at the palace.

"What brings you here, Dame Vixen?" the king asked with a smile.

"Your Majesty," she said, "I bring you greetings from my master, Slavi. He sent me to ask you if you would like him to become your son-in-law."

The king thought and thought and at last he said: "Take my greetings to your master Slavi. Tell him to come here. We'll see each other, get to know each other, and then we'll have the wedding."

Off ran Vixen to the Shepherd.

"Things are going very well! Long may you live, Young Shepherd!" she cried. "The king has already consented, he will give you his daughter. The wedding will be held at the palace."

"What about clothes" I have no wedding clothes!"

"Don't worry about that," said the Vixen.

"Wait for me in the forest. I'll bring the wedding guests and find you wedding clothes."

"But they'll see what I am!"

"You leave that to me. I know what to say and do."

Early the next morning the Vixen and the Young Shepherd set out. When they reached the forest the Vixen said:

"Wait for me here!" and off she ran to the palace.

When she arrived she went into the king, bowed low and said:

"Oh, Your Majesty, where shall I begin my tale? I'm more dead than alive! Brigands attacked us and robbed us of all we had with us! They've taken my masters clothes, and he's waiting in the forest in a borrowed shepherds suit."

"How can that be!" exclaimed the king. "Take him the finest suit there is at once. Go and welcome my son-in-law."

Many courtiers set out for the forest. There they found the Shepherd and dressed him in the finest clothes they had brought for him. Then they took him to the king.

"Look, daughter," the king said. "Does this young man take your fancy?"

"Of course, he does, father! He is young and so very handsome!"

The young couple were soon married. The king gave a grand wedding feast for them. People ate and drank for three days and three nights. On the fourth day it was decided that the king and all the wedding guests would take the happy bridal pair to their home.

The royal coaches set off with a big party. But Dame Vixen ran ahead. She saw a group of mowers by the roadside and told them:

"The king is coming this way. He will ask whose those meadows are. Be sure to say: 'They're Prince Slavi's!'"

Presently the king drove up and asked:

"Whose are these meadows?"

"They're Prince Slavi's! They're Prince Slavi's!" the mowers answered.

Dame Vixen ran on ahead. She saw some reapers and stopped beside them.

"Hey, you reapers!" Dame Vixen cried. "The king is coming this way. He will ask you whose these fields are. Be sure to say: 'They're Prince Slavi's!'"

Along came the king in his coach. He stopped to ask the reapers:

"Whose are these fields?"

"They're Prince Slavi's! They're Prince Slavi's!" the reapers answered in chorus.

In the meantime Dame Vixen had reached the forest. There she met some woodcutters.

"Hey, you woodcutters!" she cried. "The king is coming this way. He will ask you whose these forests are. Be sure you say: 'They're Prince Slavi's!'"

Sure enough the king passed by and asked them:

"Whose are these forests?"

"They're Prince Slavi's! They're Prince Slavi's!" the woodcutters cried.

The king said to his queen:

"We've had luck with our son-in-law, my queen. Just see how young and handsome he is! And he has

land enough for a kingdom!"

By now Dame Vixen had reached the palace of a Lamya*/.

"Why are you running so fast, Dame Vixen? What's the matter?" the Lamya asked.

"Open the gates quick and let me hide! And run for your life! A terrible army is marching this way! The king himself is at the head of it. He is coming to kill you, because you've been eating his people!"

"Where can I hide Dame Vixen?" the Lamya asked.

"Hide in the well, quick! I'll cover you with branches!"

The Lamya jumped into the well at once. Dame Vixen covered it with branches and went forward to welcome the guests.

"Welcome, welcome!" she cried. "Welcome to the palace. But we have an old custom here. Whoever enters the palace must first cast a stone into the well."

Each wedding guest cast a stone into the well so that it was filled to the brim and the bad Lamya was killed.

Then the wedding guests entered the palace, exclaiming at its rich furnishings.

Dame Vixen gave them a wedding feast such as they had never seen. They all ate and drank for three days and three nights, then they wished the bridal pair great happiness and a long and merry life, and went their way very pleased with the wedding.

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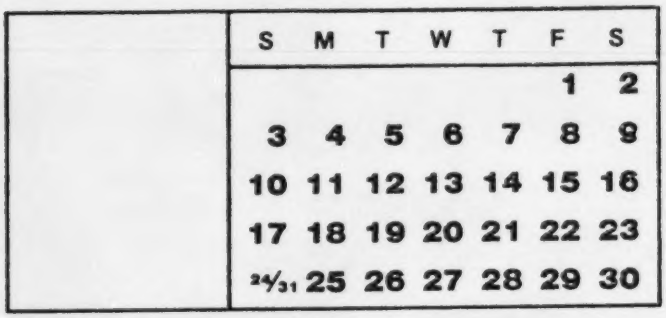
* A monster known for its greed



Once there lived a woman who had two daughters: her own and a step-daughter. She loved her own girl and hated her step-daughter.

One evening the mother called to her step-daughter and said to her:

"Take your water jars and go fetch water from the Samodiva Well!"

The girl set off for the well. It was outside the village.

When she drew near it, she noticed eleven men and one woman sitting under a tree by the well. One of the men was quite small. The woman was Granny Marta.* (the others were the eleven months, and the smallest one was Little Sechko.) The girl overcame her fear, went up to the well and said:

"Good evening, Granny, Good evening, Uncles!"

"Good evening, lassie," the months answered.

"This is no time to be coming here. Aren't you afraid?"

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*The month of March is Mart in Bulgarian; because of its uncertain weather it is called Marta, and is considered a feminine month, so it is generally known as Baba Marta, or Granny Marta. February is called Little Sechko (from little sech, cutting) because it is the coldest month, but the cold spell lasts a short time. January is Big Sechko.

"Whether I'm afraid or not, I have to come when I'm sent."

"Listen to me, I'm going to ask you a question. 'Which months of the year are bad and which are good?'"

"Oh, kind Granny," said the girl, "all the months are as good as good can be. There's not one of them that's bad."

"Go home with our good wishes, lassie!" Granny Marta said, blessing her. "May gold pieces fall from your lips when you speak!"

The girl filled her water jars and went home.

"Good evening, mother," she said, and gold pieces fell from her lips.

"What is this miracle?" asked the step-mother.

"I don't know, mother. The old woman at the well blessed me." And the girl told the story of the months.

The following evening the mother sent her own daughter to the months. When she reached the well, Granny Marta asked her:

"Which months of the year are bad and which are good?"

The girl answered:

"Why anyone will tell you! Big Sechko and Little Sechko are the worst. As for Granny Marta! She's hard to beat. When she's cross, you'd better not cross her path. The other months are none too good either! But they have us in their power! There's nothing we can do!"

"Well, may you be blessed!" said Granny Marta. "Whenever you speak may little snakes fall from your lips!"

The girl filled her jars and went home. Her mother met her and asked:

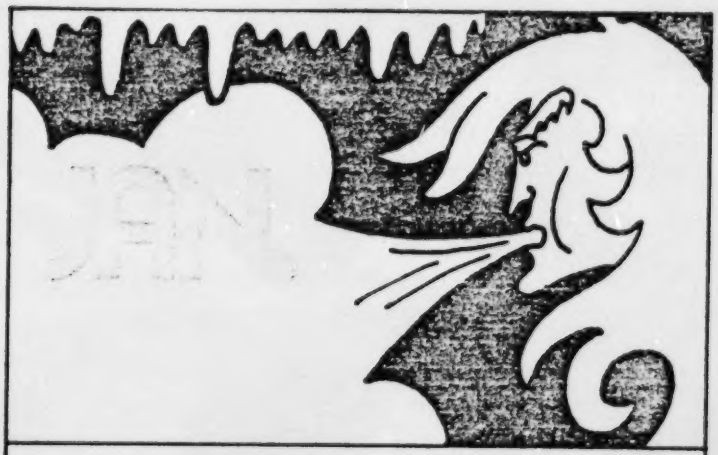
"What happened, daughter?"

"They gave me an ill blessing, mother!" her daughter answered, and as she spoke little snakes began to fall from her lips.

"Dearie me, daughter, what have we done! What are these little snakes falling from your lips?"

"We thought evil, mother, and evil has befallen us."

And mother and daughter began to weep bitterly.



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13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

A lovely girl called Bogdanka grew up in a village. She was her mother's and father's only child and she was very spoilt indeed. Her mother did all the house work, the cleaning and cooking. Bogdanka only walked about and never set her hand to anything.

Suitors began to come from this village and that to ask for her hand. Her mother told them all:

"Our Bogdanka has not been taught to work. She is very spoilt."

When they heard this, the suitors always went away.

One day an old man came and said:

"I hear you have a lovely girl, so I have come to take her to my house to be my daughter-in-law."

Her mother gave him the same answer:

"Our Bogdanka is very spoilt. She doesn't know how to work."

"Never mind," said the old man. "Nobody will make her work in my house. Whoever wants to works. Whoever doesn't want to work doesn't."

The wedding took place a week or two later.

The old man had three sons and two older daughters-in-law.

The day after the wedding they all went to work.

The bride sat there all dressed up and did not lay her hand to anything.

The family came home for lunch at noon. They sat down at the table. The bride sat aside and waited to be asked to the table. The other daughters-in-law brought the dish. They set a big loaf of bread before their father-in-law. He took it and broke it into as many pieces as there were people at the table.

"What about the bride?" asked the mother-in-law.

"She isn't hungry," the old man said. "When one doesn't work, one doesn't get hungry."

In the afternoon they all went to work again. The bride sat still and did not lay her hand to anything.

The family gathered in the evening for supper. They put a loaf of bread before their father-in-law. The old man took it and again broke it into as many pieces as there were people at the table.

"What about Bogdanka?" asked the mother-in-law.

"She isn't hungry," answered the old man. "Whoever does no work, doesn't get hungry."

The family had their supper, discussed what each one was to do the next day, then went to bed and were all soon fast asleep.

The bride went to bed, too. But can a hungry person sleep? She was barely able to wait until the day began to dawn. She got up quietly, washed, milked the cows and took the heifers out.

The others got up, too. When they saw what the bride had done, they looked at one another and smiled.

At noon the bride laid the table and sat down together with the others. The old man broke up the loaf and handed her the biggest piece, saying:

"You have worked more than any of the others, today, young bride. Here's your share of the loaf."

A week or two went by. The bride worked hard the live-long day.

In the third week her father and mother came to visit her. The family saw them coming and everyone went out to welcome them.

The bride ran ahead of them. She opened the gates wide and called quickly:

"Mother!... Father!... Get out of the cart quickly and set to work. Things here aren't like they are at home.... Here whoever does not work goes hungry!"

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BULGARIA

България